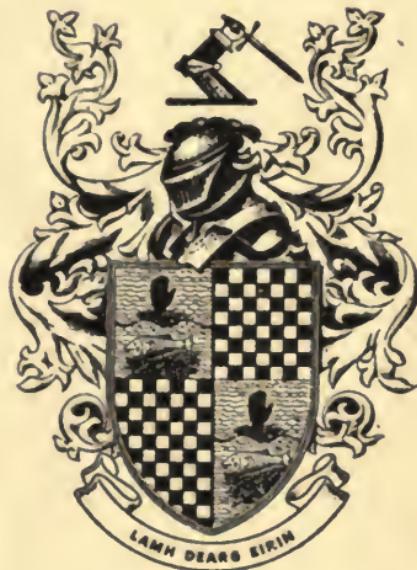




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AUTUMN SONGS.

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AUTUMN SONGS

BY

VIOLET FANE

AUTHOR OF "DENZIL PLACE," "QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES," "ANTHONY
BABINGTON," ETC., ETC.

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AUTUMN SONGS.

THE SCARAB.

(DEDICATION.)

You brought me once,—from a distant land,
A sacred scarab, 'graven o'er
With mystic characters,—It bore
(You said, and turn'd it in your hand,)
A chapter from the Book of Death,
That oldest of all books,—which saith:

“Oh, my heart, that camest to me from my mother !
My heart that camest to me at my birth,—
That throbbed within me whilst I dwelt on Earth
And took my pastime amongst living men ;—
Rise not up against me now, and as a foe
Before Osiris the changeless, and those other

Autumn Songs.

Divinest Rulers of the plaited beard,
For pow'r of sceptre praised and feared,—
Bear witness against one that was thy brother
When thou and I, together, used to go
And take our pastime amongst living men!"

And then you told how,—where the Nile winds thro'
Its fertile fields to dunes of shifting sand,—
And where the ev'ning light makes blue
The low hills of the Libyan land,
There,—hidden in the mountain's core,—
Approached by labyrinthian ways,—
Vast chambers,—where the dead once more
Were seen of men,—their walls upraise—

The flickering torch's fitful flame
Illuminates the haunted shade,—
The lotus-budded colonnade
Of blended stalks,—the sculptured name
Set forth, in hieroglyphic sign,
Beneath the pictured vulture-wings,
Where once,—sole monarchs of the mine,
Reposed those old Egyptian Kings.

So long ago,—So long ago,
They lived, and breathed, and held their sway,
We scarcely seem to know, to-day,
If they were gods or men !
And that last Queen,—who, erst, unstrung
And drank off the pearl to her Roman lover,—
They were so old when she was young
Maybe she hardly could discover
Their names and stories then !

Yet is it given to us to know
And read their lineaments ;—to see
The fringed lid,—the beetling brow,
The air of majesty.
The deft embalmer's subtle skill
Hath balked the worm, and turn'd the grave
Into these regal halls, where still
From pedestal to architrave
The dead men's glorious deeds survive ! . . .
—Here their triumphant chariots drive
To certain victory, and crush
The vanquish'd 'neath their wheels,—whilst hither
Still doth the swarthy Ethiop bring,
On bended knee, his offering,

The tribute of the "Land of Cush"
In ivory, gold, and ostrich-feather.

Here feast they,—as they did of old,
Exalted on their thrones of State,—
The cup-bearers, with cups of gold,
The fan-bearers, and minstrels wait
To serve them as they sit at meat ;—
Hard by, the light-foot damsels stand,—
All starry-eyed and fair of face,—
The hawk-head god is close at hand,
The symbol of their Royal race,
The lotus blossoms at their feet ;

But all is Silence ! . . . Countless years have rolled
Since their last shout of battle died away,
Still'd is the clashing of their arms for aye,
Voiceless the singers,—mute the harps of gold ! . . .

Thus the departed rulers of the land
Reposed in noiseless solitude, and slept
Untroubled,—save when the lithe serpent crept
At parch'd Midsummer, o'er the whispering sand,

To take his rest amongst the Kingly throng,
Or when,—at sunset,—from the fretted roof
The great bats flutter'd ;—but no sounds of Earth
Heaving in travail, or in transient mirth
Disturb'd their rest,—no creak of strain'd *shadōf*
Nor burial wail, nor boatman's evening song.

And here it was that, in the hollow breast
Of a dead Pharaoh,—sealed to pulseless calm,
In bitumen and aromatic balm,
My scarabæus had his hidden nest
And waited patiently the promised end.
It was his sacred privilege to plead
With the high Gods for the offending heart
That once had beat there, and thus play the part
Of Mediator in its hour of need,
Standing the dead man's advocate and friend.

For, ah, what smould'ring passions may have lain
Beneath this scarab, or in loosen'd fires
Burst forth to waste and ravage! . . . Wild desires
With pride of State, and lust of conquer'd gain! . . .
For these he might have pleaded,—not in vain,
But, as it chanced,—from the barbaric North

In some remote, iconoclastic, age,
The spoiler came,—who (with his Embassage
All unachieved,) dragged the poor scarab forth
Into a world where all his Gods were slain.

Oh hapless scarab, that, in days gone by
Wert wont to lie
In those high halls of ancient sepulture
Nestling, secure,
In the still'd chamber of a monarch's breast,
By his supreme behest
Accredited to gods that haunt no more
Old Nile's degenerate shore,
Since the invading desecrator came
With sword and flame,
The ravisher of tombs,—and changed thy fate
How art thou fallen from thine high estate !

I take thee,—unresisting,—in my hand ;—
A lumpish thing,—wrought out of sea-grey stone,—
Conventional ;—no beetle that on land
Or sea, or river, ever yet was known !
Thou mightest be a tortoise,—by thy size,—
Thy wings are scored like the eternal hills ;—

Thou seem'st to me superlatively wise
And old, and staid, and numb to earthly ills !

Yet, as becomes an Envoy of great Kings
To greater gods,—a consequential air
Seems to possess thee, as thy fluted wings
Fold down above the mummied Pharaohs' pray'r.

"How art thou fallen from thine high estate
Alas, poor scarab!" I exclaim once more,—
"Sold into bondage on this Wintry shore,
Serving in exile as a paper-weight!"

But what, mayhap, he wist not, when he came
To do this penal service, and in shame,
Humiliation, and dissembled wrath,
To perch upon, and press, from dawn to dark,
The written scroll,—wherein each crabbèd mark
Was fraught with mystery;—she that did possess
And mould him to her will,—his task-mistress,—
Was a disciple of the learnèd Thoth
The god of Letters. In the solitude

Of her barbaric chamber,—ere she wooed
The stuffed and bloated head-stool of the North,¹
She from her pointed grey goose-quill, poured forth
At that lone midnight hour, an inky wave
 Of inspiration on the virgin page,
Whereon she used to set her scarab slave
 Then seek her couch. As, thus, his vassalage
Thro' days and nights continued,—(being wise
 With wisdom of the Ages, and discreet
Even beyond his years,) the mysteries
 Wherewith his new existence seem'd replete
 Stood forth reveal'd, and when he took his seat
Upon the summit of his paper throne,—
(So she believes who claims him as her own,)
 He could mark, learn, and inwardly digest
Each garner'd thought, and, haply, recognize
 Some of those passions that, in Pharaoh's breast
 His mission 'twas to plead for;—Wild desires
Smould'ring unstifled, with intent to prize
 The gift before the Giver, and His due
Wrest from the Lord of All,—with loosen'd fires

¹ Her pillow is here intended. The ancient Egyptians repos'd upon a wooden rest or head-stool.

Of envy,—hatred,—vain imaginings
And vainer loves! Those old things, ever new,
That have survived all Egypt's gods and Kings!

"Oh, my heart, that camest to me from my mother!" . . .
My erring human heart, that, as a foe
May rise against me! If the scarab's pray'r
Savours too much of gods we have outgrown
To soar aloft thro' that sublimer air
Which separates us from the Eternal Throne,
May it, at least, prove pure enough to go
And plead for me on Earth with Man, my brother!

So, when to you,—the truest and the best
Of all surviving friends,—I dedicate
The wand'ring fancies that were lately pressed
By this,—your gift,—grown up into a book
For your acceptance;—that your eyes may look
With more indulgence on the thoughts expressed
So faultily,—my sacred paper-weight
I set upon the cover,—like a crest,
With its pathetic pray'r inviolate.

LIFE'S AFTERNOON.

I sit at rest, and in Life's Afternoon,
Look back in pitying wonder, at its dawn
And fierce meridian heat,—whilst all too soon
The ev'ning shadows lengthen on the lawn,
And ere yon pink glow leaves the Western sky
To-day is numbered with the days gone by.

How did I strive and struggle in the sun,
In the hot noontide of those ardent years! . . .
What rash encounters, then, were lost and won
Wherein my heart's blood mingled with my tears! . . .
Tears that are dried,—blood that has ceased to flow,
Few are the shafts could strike to wound me now!

All things have changed of late;—I know the gold
For what it is, and fling aside the dross,—

Few are the treasures that I care to hold
And fewer those whereof I mourn the loss,—
I can forgive and pity, tho' I look
In a false face and read it like a book.

Ah, me! for time and strength to make amends
For all that ardour, anger,—fond belief! . . .
To reap the meed of scorning paltry ends,
To glean in Wisdom's fields and bind the sheaf
Nor feel afraid that I may be bereft
Of e'en this doubtful daylight that is left!

Methinks I know the life that I should choose
To live again, could I but have a voice
In mine own destiny, nor would I use
The boon so lightly as to rue my choice,
Since all the errors I can ne'er forget
Should seem like danger-signals ready set.

I would not be a rover, and so waste
In small-change moments, such a golden prize,
But husbanding the seasons without haste
Would leave myself full leisure to grow wise,—

And, knowing how delusive all things prove,
I would not strive or envy,—hate or love.

For, in the rays of that enlightened day
Mine eyes should see things truly as they are,—
The golden idol, with the feet of clay,
The glow-worm that I took to be a star,—
Nor would I bow at any earthly shrine
Since God, and God alone, should be divine.

I would remember that the desert sands
Efface their traces that have passed before,
And that the freshest footprint only stands
Till newer whirlwinds shall have swept it o'er,
So, with the victor's crown,—the poet's bays,
New heroes rise,—new minstrels sing new lays.

And, were I prone to envy rosier blush,
Or brighter glance, or sunnier locks, than mine,
I would remember Beauty is no bush
Set up to tempt the traveller to good wine;—
That jewell'd cup hath oft held poisoned draught
Beguiling unto death the lips that quaffed.

Yet would I dwell by pleasant, leafy, ways,
Where Nature's aspect should, at least, beam fair,
Where peaceful nights should follow pensive days
Purged of all passion and exempt from care,—
My pleasures simple,—my requirements few,
My part,—to *ponder*,—rather than *to do*.

A garden and a sundial,—but its face
Should be with blinding clematis o'errun,
So that the eye no envious line should trace
To warn of when the tranquil day was done,—
And sloping lawns, and tinkling silver brooks,
One chosen friend, perhaps, and favourite books. . . .

Ah voice of Wisdom, vainer than the fool's !
Dull, joyless, echo of a vanish'd tune !
Who would not give the frosts of fifty Yules
For one brief season warmed with Love and June !
Said I my heart was dead ? . . . I spake untrue ;—
Ah, Love ! it lives, and beats, and beats for you !

What soul could soar once human hopes were brought
To this low level of contemptuous scorn ?

What crude of oil would feed the Lamp of Thought,
 What frolic fancies animate the morn? . . .
 How would such passionless perfection rise
 Above the bigot's pictured Paradise? . . .

The fruits of Wisdom make a mawkish feast
 Since sweet and bitter are our nature's due;—
 Come back,—young lover! to my lonely breast
 And tho' I know you false, I'll dream you true!
 Hail dear delusions! welcome hopes and fears!
 Come storm and sunshine, fraught with smiles and tears!

I sit at rest and Autumn-time is here! . . .
 Her first red leaf lies quivering at my feet,—
 At rest,"— not yet at peace! Oh, hurrying year!
 Oh, Youth, and Summer, that were once so sweet,
 Ere I renounce you,—with your joys and woes,—
 I must await the numbing Winter snows!

A few swift days,—scarce time to close the door
 Against the blast, or draw the easy chair
 Towards the glowing hearth, and Winter hoar
 Will chill our blood, and sweep our branches bare,

And even thus the Winter of our days
Shall numb our senses and obscure our gaze.

But now? . . . Has all the sun-glow left the skies? . . .
Is ev'ry songster silent in the grove? . . .
Despite the dreary warnings of the wise
May I not sing of Summer-time and Love?
"Surely,"—(soft voices whisper in my ear,)—
Both will return to you again next year?"

Delusive whispers! . . . Ah, perfidious time
In which each varied season hath a part,—
When Winter's frosts are withering our prime
Whilst Summer sunsets flicker in the heart,—
When Age's Wisdom links with Youth's Desire
And placid brow belies a breast of fire!

How shall a minstrel wake the trembling lyre
And sing of Love, in Autumn-time, and live? . . .
Yet cold the verse that lacks the sacred fire
Which Hope, and Youth, and Love, alone can give!
I strike the lyre; the answering echoes ring:—
Say, oh, my Friend! is it too late to sing? . . .

Nay ! for in serer Autumns have I seen
Some slim brown bird start up upon a spray
And warble as tho' all the world were green
And chill October blossoming like May,—
Yet droops the rose, and howso' sweet the song
Nor bird nor minstrel may rejoice for long.

CONTRASTS.

A SONG OF THE WIND.

"A venturesome fellow is the Wind : creeping through the keyholes
and crannies of a house, he must wot of strange contrasts."

WITH their heads on the self-same pillow
 A bride and a bridegroom kiss'd,
But the Wind is a venturesome fellow
 Who sings: "I can roam where I list :—

"I can creep,—I can crouch,—I can clamber,"
 And he whispers, now, soft, over-head,
"Stretch'd out in the very next chamber
 Lies a corpse all alone on the bed."

TWO PICTURES.

I. LOVERS IN A GARDEN. II. A WIDOW KNITTING BY AN EMPTY CRADLE.

I.

A MAIDEN, in a garden, dreaming
 Of fairy-prince and halcyon days;
Her head, with sunny tresses gleaming,
 Bowed down beneath dim trellised ways.

A row of sunflow'rs by a paling,
 A wicket left upon the latch,
A summer-house, with woodbine trailing,
 And ivy creeping o'er the thatch.

A footfall on the garden gravel,
 A quick'ning heart, a whispered word;
A youth, burnt brown with foreign travel,
 Come back to claim a hope deferred.

(O happy, happy time of Love's beginning,
Ere ever we can guess that storms are near !
Sunlight glancing, buds unfolding, thrushes singing,
Golden Summer of the soul and of the year !)

II.

A GARRET in a city byway,
A pale sad woman all alone ;
A weary wand'rer on Life's highway,
Poor and forsaken and unknown.

What need to knit the little stocking,
Or strive again for daily bread ?
Why set an empty cradle rocking ?
The nestling has for ever fled !

“Yes, both are gone ; perchance 'tis better !”
She sighs at length. “'Tis better so !”
Then bends to read a tattered letter,
Or turns to watch the falling snow.

(Ah, bitter, bitter time of Sorrow's waking,
Ere ever we can dream that hope is near!
Snow is falling, flow'rs are fading, hearts are breaking,
Weary Winter of the soul and of the year!)

VICTORIA.

21ST JUNE, 1887.

QUEEN of so many nations that the sun
Sets not upon the boundaries of thy sway,—
Whom men of varied clime and creed obey,—
Mother of many Princes,—wife of one
Who,—now these fleet-foot fifty years are run
Whereof the festival is held to-day,—
Sees not thy golden tresses turned to grey,
But,—in eternal slumber, slumbers on ;—
How many glorious images unite
'Round thine illustrious name !—The Dragon's head
Beneath St. George's heel :—the Lion's might :—
Britannia :—India's Empress,—robed in red,
Crowned and enthroned !—Then lo ! thou com'st
in sight,—
A lonely woman,— sable garmented.

LINES UPON A STATUETTE REPRESENTING LOVE AND DEATH.

TIME was, mine eyes were pleased with this conceit;—
A little god in bronze,—with gilded wings,—
His dart already poised, and, at his feet,
A grinning skull, o'errun with creeping things.

And, strewn around, trite emblem and curl'd scroll,—
Telling of transient joy and fleeting breath,
Time's hour-glass lying by the festive bowl,
Love's empty quiver by the scythe of Death.

Ah, whilst the bowl was crown'd,—the quiver full,
Love's fingers feeling for the fatesful shaft,—
Careless of gleaming scythe, or grinning skull,
Along the “primrose path” we kissed and quaffed!

Oh, for one draught from that enchanted spring! . . .

One honest wound from that uplifted dart!

Oh, for some new,—some unexpected thing,

Wise tho' we be,—to make us fools at heart!

We want not Wisdom now; we grow too wise—

Smite us, dear Love! we'll glory in the scar!

Yea; press thy bandage closer to our eyes

So that we know things not for what they are!

Why hearken, now, to such an oft-told tale? . . .

In the calm twilight of our Autumn days

Were it not best that pious hands should veil

All sombre symbols from our sadden'd gaze?

So that we see but *half* this grim conceit;—

A little god in bronze, with gilded wings,—

His dart all ready poised, but, at his feet,

Nor hour-glass, scythe, nor skull with creeping things!

THE MER-BABY.

(SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE BY MISS DOROTHY TENNANT.)

THEY wander'd forth,—link'd hand in hand,
To watch their father's speeding sail,
When lo ! they saw it on the sand,
A mer-baby, with folded tail,—

A mer-baby,—all pale and dead,—
Left stranded by the ebbing tides,—
With sea-weeds wreathed about its head
And silver fins upon its sides.

They strove by many an artless wile
To wake it up and make it play,—
The wan sea-baby would not smile,—
All cold and motionless it lay.

Its eyes were closed as tho' in sleep,
Its fingers clasped as tho' in pray'r,—
The little land-babes could but weep
To see it lying lonely there !

Then out and spake the elder one,—
(His eyes as azure as the wave,)“ We will not leave it here alone
But make for it a pretty grave,
“ Near where our little sisters sleep
Hard by the hedge where violets grow,
Where mother often goes to weep
And mind her children in a row.”

They took it to their mother dear,—
She loved not mer-folk over well,
For she had heard those tales of fear
The deep-sea fishers have to tell,

And well she knew that bleaching skulls
Lie hidden in the changeful main
'Neath where the siren lures and lulls
The mariner with dulcet strain,—

This, ay, and more, the mother knew,—
 Yet, when she saw a thing so fair
With folded tail,—all silver-blue,
 And fingers clasped as tho' in pray'r,—

She made for it a pretty bed,—
 All velvet-soft with gathered moss,
And set a sea-shell at its head
 Because she dared not set a cross,—

Near where her little daughters slept,—
 Hard by the hedge where violets grow,—
Where, often times, she went, and wept
 To see their green graves in a row,—

And, "Heaven grant, my babes," said she,
 "If father sinks beneath the wave,
The fish-tailed people of the sea
 May make for him as soft a grave."

THE LAMENT OF A WHITE ROSE.

I GREW beside a garden seat,
Where happy children laugh'd and play'd,
And tender lovers—dreaming—stray'd,
Whilst all my budding breast was sweet;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose!)

Anon, the children's mirth was o'er,
The tender lovers clung and wept;
Within the house a mother slept
Her last long sleep, to wake no more;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose!)

They came and cull'd a fun'r'al wreath,
They pluck'd the white, they spared the red,
They flung me on a straiten'd bed,
On her cold breast who lay in death.
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose!)

They mourn'd and sigh'd in bow'r and hall,
The children cried, the lovers clung;
A great bell tolled with solemn tongue,
The coffin-lid leant by the wall;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose!)

They listed up the coffin-lid,
Strange footsteps echoed on the stair,
Her children came to see her there,
And kiss her ere her face was hid;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose!)

They wept in hall, they wept in bow'r
Their tears fell o'er me as they kissed her,
But the red rose weeps for her own pale sister
Buried alive 'neath the grey church tow'r.
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose!)

A CHANCE LIKENESS.

SOMETIMES it happens,—in Life's Afternoon,
We see a passing face like one we knew
At Youth's beginning, when each pulse beat high
With hope and joy in living. From the crowd,—
The careless crowd,—that might not understand
That a lost love can light a living face,—
How do we long to welcome such a one,—
To call him to our side, to clasp his hand,
And greet him as a friend ! . . With yearning eyes
We seek his own, expectant of the smile
Of recognition . . . Ah! . he knows us not ! . .
The sacred symbols,—like a hollow mask
Portraying one we loved, are set to-day
Upon a stranger's brow ! . . The lips are mute,—
The eyes perceive us not,—no kindly word
Falls to our share,—with hunger in our gaze
We see the phantom fade, and stand forlorn,
A sad survivor ! . . God, and our own hearts
Know all we miss on earth ! . .

CLARA.

(AGED SEVENTEEN.)

WATCHING the summer swallows slit and pass,
My Clara,—grown a lissome nut-brown maid,
Stands dreaming 'midst the daisied meadow-grass
In her own youth and innocence arrayed;—

She cares not for the city's noise and glare,—
A country girl, in pleasant places bred,—
Fenced round from outward harm by tender care,
Peace in her heart and sunshine o'er her head.

Yet, sometimes,—as I watch her standing thus,
I ask myself, half-sadly: Where is she,—
That other Clara,—who was once with us,—
Whose head could scarcely reach above my knee? . . .

I seek her in the shady orchard walk,—
I miss her pattering footsteps on the floor,—
Yet hear the echo of her baby-talk
And read her height upon the nursery door.

No curly head comes to the window-sill
As once,—responsive to my loving call,—
Tho' there the painted bars are fasten'd still
That saved the pretty nestling from a fall;—

But, thro' them, somehow,—little Clara fled,—
And, every day, I mark, with new surprise,
The stately maiden, sent me in her stead
With pensive mien and earnest waiting eyes,—

A woman grown, and nursing in her breast
Haply,—a thousand fond imaginings,—
Her wings all ready plumed to leave the nest,
Her fancy eager to outstrip her wings.

So do the changing Seasons glide away
Under the calm unalterable stars,—
And e'en to *me*, it seems but yesterday
When *I*, too, looked at Life thro' nursery-bars!

HAZELY HEATH.

'TIS "chill October," yet the linnet sings,—
Still are our brows with balmy breezes fanned ;—
No Winter makes a desert of this land
Of my adoption, where each season brings
To charm the sense,—new guerdon of good things,
And Autumn only spreads with tender hand
A richer mantle o'er the billowy sand,
Golden and purple,—braver than a King's.
Here all is light and song, with odorous breath
Of briar and pine,—whilst ever, early and late,
The yellow gorse,—like "kissing-time," or Death,
Abides with us. It were a worthier fate
To crawl,—(methinks,)—a worm,—on Hazely Heath,
Than strut,—a peacock,—at a Palace gate !

SOUVENIR.

(WRITTEN IN A BOOK.)

I SEE the spot, in fancy, where we read
This book together, 'neath a Southern sky ;—
A mighty chestnut towers overhead
And shades us from the sun,—beneath us lie
Fair fields, and flowering meads, and orchards trim,
And then,—the little town, where, here and there,
Seeming no bigger than the flies that skim
Yon tinkling Alpine stream,— by Inn and Square,
Flit men and women,—strangers, and unknown
To you and me, who, from our Northern Isle
Like two stray skiffs,—by shifting tempests blown,
Have reach'd this quiet haven, where the smile
Of Nature greets us, and the skies are fair
And hopeful as my heart ! . . . Thro' branch and bine
Of trailing clematis,—the fragrant air
Comes laden with soft sound and sweetest scent,

Thrilling the trembling fox-glove and young vine
As with a sigh of pleasure and content
Such as I feel at last! . . . Here, as we rest
On the felled trunk of some such giant tree
As that which shades us,—in my grateful breast
What dreams arise of sweet tranquillity,—
Of Home,—of Love! . . , A life when every day
Might be as this one,—when the happy night
Would join instead of parting, and the way
To surer rest, should seem so swift a flight
Our souls might make this comfort of sad hearts
Their only haunting terror! . . Then, you read
From this same book, wherein, it seemed,—in parts,—
(Spoken by that dear voice which, were I dead
Methinks would wake me,)—thoughts that had been mine
An unknown poet sang ;—of true-love crown'd,—
Of grief for true-love's loss ;—of Life's decline
To peaceful Autumn, when green leaves are brown'd
And brown locks silver'd ;—And, the while you read
You held my hand, and leagues of land and sea
Seem'd spread between me and each anxious dread,
Whilst all the world seem'd fair,—since you,—to me
Were all the world! . . . ,

AN EGOTIST'S CREED.

Lost in a maze of idle thought
This world to me so perfect seems,—
So bright and light with glancing beams
And pleasant pastures, flower-fraught,
'Tis as the heaven of my dreams;—

And if my feet could always stroll
Along the sweet familiar ways
I would not change this earthly phase
Of Life and Love, for all the soul
May gain in promised lands of praise..

In vain, for me, the preacher raves,
Exulting in his narrow creed,—
The sinner's doom,—the good man's meed,—
In yon grey pile amongst the graves
I lend no ear, and take no heed;—

For, can the Giver of All Good
To further some prepost'rous plan,
Have made, in enmity to man,
So fair a world,—in wrathful mood
Turning a blessing to a ban?

Nay, tho' I know that millions pine,
And see the maimed, the halt, the blind,—
The pallid forms that sweat and grind
And toil at furnace, mill, and mine,
Yet will I deem Him just and kind.

“Ay, ‘just and kind’! ‘Ay, ‘kind and just’!’”
(Ten thousand mocking voices say),
“To thrust us forth,—to our dismay
The brood of drunkenness and lust,—
Where all, save we, keep holiday!

For us no shade of summer trees,
No sight of daisy-spangled sward,—
We, the accursèd of the Lord,
Must toil for you who sit at ease,
Disease and Death our sole reward!

"Can our crush'd hearts ascend in pray'r,—
Our woeful accents hymn the praise
Of that stern Pow'r that smites and slays
His creatures, when too weak to bear
Their burden of disast'rous days?

"And dread ye not,—who sit and weave
Sweet, idle fancies, at your will,
Who grasp the good, and spurn the ill,—
That sky may fall, or earth upheave,
Or some swift bolt avenge us still?" . . .

These voices somewhat mar my rest,— . . .
Well, well! We know not what is planned! . . .
Some must be wretched in the land,—
All things are ordered for the best,
And more, we may not understand!

So, whilst,—for me,—the world is bright,
Whilst skies are blue, and fields are fair,
Need I the ills of others share?
My gladness gives them no delight,
Shall I lament for their despair?

AN EQUINOCTIAL GALE.

TO-NIGHT the winds of Heav'n are all unbound
And sweep, with angry breath, the Autumn glade,
And as I, waking,—listen to the sound,
My spirit falters, and I feel afraid.

Knowing how small a planet is our World,—
Poised, like a bubble, in Eternal space,
One well might wonder that it is not hurl'd
This ev'ning, from its old appointed place;

But, as the little emmet, that has borne
Some fancied treasure to his fairy hill
Fears not for cities wrecked, or forests torn,
So he can cling to what he toil'd for still ;—

So, since this battling of the winds began
My heart has sought thee on the raging main,
Tho', in the mighty universal plan,
My pearl is even as the emmet's grain !

ON CHRISTMAS-EVE.

ON Christmas-eve—(How long ago ?
I muse, yet cannot count the score)—
She, shrouded in her mantle, so—
(It must be twenty years or more)—
Went weeping through yon curtained door,
Into the softly falling snow.

She had said mad unmeaning thing :
Had knelt to me, and clasped my krees ;
Called up the ghosts of vanished springs,
And kisses under summer trees,
Deeming the memory of these
Would hinder Love's unfettered wings.

She spoke of fealty giv'n in vain,
Of pledge and promise writ on sand,

Of past delights and present pain,
With more I did not understand ;
Then drew my ring from off her hand,
And thrust it back on me again.

That ring (my lady wears it now)
She used to call her wedding-ring,—
A crown, with heart-shaped pearl below
(*My heart*, she said, poor little thing !)
What profits it remembering ?
It is but foolishness, I know).

She cursed me, kneeling at my feet
(Not that such curses aught avail !) ;
Then, changing swift from sad to sweet,
She kissed me through her tear-stained veil
Then rose, prophetical and pale,
And, e'er she sought the silent street,

“If the dead ever rise,” she said,—
“The dead that do not wait to die,—

Then, maybe, after you are wed
To one more fortunate than I,
On some such ev'ning, by and by,
You'll see me standing by your bed."

The deerhound crouching at my side
Whined low, and seemed to understand ;
All movement in the street had died,
I knew the snow lay soft as sand ;
I saw the clock, with straightened hand,
Like index-finger raised to chide.

Half after twelve ! And, as to-night,
I sat here, dozing all alone ;
I woke to start at something white,
That whispered in an undertone,
Whilst all around a glory shone—
(It must have been some trick of light.)

There seemed a sound of surging tide,
A voice as from a wat'ry grave ;

And then, a figure like a bride,
With tresses floating on the wave,
Cried out to me to help and save—
(I wonder how and when she died !).

And then I looked, and lo ! the clock
Stood at the hour, the hands were there,—
Half after twelve ! A shiv'ring shock,
A sense of wringing clinging hair,
A flutt'ring footfall on the stair,
And then—Stay ! there's my lady's knock.

Her rating wifely tones I hear—
(Her voice is somewhat shrill and high;)—
Her trailing silks come rustling near
(No one can dress like Lady Di.)—
Ghosts of the bygone years, good-bye !—
“A merry Christmas to you, dear !”

WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF "THE
WORKS OF SHENSTONE,"

WHICH HAD BELONGED TO LORD BYRON WHEN A STUDENT AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND IN WHICH THE POET HAD INSCRIBED SOME LAUDATORY REMARKS CONCERNING THE AUTHOR.

"By Poet written, and by Poet read,
A twofold glory shines upon my head;—
Perish'd the eyes that read,—the hand that wrote,—
Tatter'd and travel-stained my russet coat,—
Yet still I live to Fame!—In living eyes,
To living hands,—a treasure and a prize,—
Lord Byron's book! . . . Ere yet the accomplished
days
Had wreathed his forehead with immortal bays,—
Whilst the Promethean spark,—to Fame unknown,
Smoulder'd beneath an Academic gown,

Byron ! I was thine own !—oft laid to rest,
Rock'd by the throb of thine impetuous breast,
Clasped by thy hand,—commended by thy pen
Ere yet thou hadst thy place with gods or men !

“ Illustrious Master ! thy brief race is run,—
Whilst chilled by Winter,—warm'd by Summer sun,—
The pen that praised me evermore at rest,
I bide with mortals still, a favoured guest ! . . .
Ah ! had Death claimed thee 'ere thy genius reigned
Fame had been cheated of what Honour gained ;—
Silent the voice of thine immortal song,
Silent the carpings of the spiteful throng,—
Untraced pain's record on thine uncrown'd brow,
Unmoved the million hearts that love thee now !—
And *I*,—this humble thing of prose and rhyme,—
Thy friend and servant of a vanish'd time,
Had been but ‘Works of Shenstone,’ badly bound,
Nor cost my present mistress twenty pound’ ! ”

TO LADY CONSTANCE HOWARD
(WHO ASKED ME TO WRITE A SONNET).

I DREAD the Sonnet, whose insidious tones
Allure, and captivate, and lull to sleep
The wingèd steed ! No siren of the Deep
Singing to whit'ning harp of dead men's bones
Discourseth sweeter strains, yet are the moans
Of disembodied ghosts, or winds that sweep
The woodlands bare, less sad than these, that keep
The soul in thrall, and turn its bread to stones.
My Muse would wake to larger life, and slip
Such prison bonds,—eager to soar and sing
High with the carolling lark,—or, all as free,
Chirp with the sparrow ;—with the swallow dip
To Earth's green breast, or roam,—on wider wing,
To undiscovered countries over-sea.

A FABLE.

DIGGING amongst my turnips, one fine day,
I spied, as I upheaved, a clod of clay,
A lithe red worm—the gard'ner's special dread—
Coiled round a promising young turnip-head.
“Ah, noisome reptile, thus thy greed is foiled !”
I cried, and would have crushed him as he coiled,
When, lo ! methought, this worm of aspect meek
Turned, and tho' counted speechless, seemed to speak ;—
“Forbear, rash fool !” (it proudly said) “nor deem
My tastes as vegetarian as they seem,
But, . . . *I am blind!* . . . and groping here, to-day,
A large round object barred me in my way,—
’Twas but thy turnip ! not the thing I sought,—
The Seat of Fancy, and the Throne of Thought !
Enjoy it whilst thou mayst, in upper air,
Whilst *I*, in darkness, seek for daintier fare.
Patience, in time, shall sure fruition bring :—
My grandfather once feasted on a king !”

SONG.

“I WONDER WILL YOU TWINE FOR ME,” &c.

“Dark tree! still sad when others’ grief is fled,—
The only constant mourner o’er the dead!”

BYRON.

I WONDER,—will you twine for me
Sad cypress wreaths when I am dead,
Or, sentinel,—like yon dark tree,
Watch, constant, o’er my lonely bed?

Or will you,—like some forest bird
Escaped the slumb’ring fowler’s snare,
Plume your free’d wings, and heavenward
Soar blithely thro’ the ambient air? . . .

Methinks at both my heart would bleed,—
My spirit-heart, ’neath folded wings,—
If our poor sexless souls shall heed
The passing of terrestrial things!

So, choose, my love, some middle way ;—
At morn,—like falcon fresh and free
Soar sunwards,—but, at closing day
Be, sometimes, like the cypress tree ;—

Mute o'er a memory remain
In centred thought, one little minute,—
Unclasp one closed-up book again
And read the story written in it !

SNOW AT CHRISTMAS.

SNOWFLAKES on laden bough and whitened ledge ;
Poor Robin Redbreast chirping for his crumbs ;
Imprisoned waters under drooping sedge ;
Sad children, carolling in cold that numbs
And hangs the icicles upon the spray,
Paling green fields, and making skies as dun
And veiled as Destiny ! . . . Thus Christmas comes
Girt with the well-worn symbols, whilst away
From off the far horizon's utmost edge
His semblance fades, before a rising sun,
Who turned the season to a holiday.

“SHE WILL NOT WAKE!”

I.

“If it should chance, upon some future day,
You hear them say
Haply, that I am lain asleep in death,
Close to my breath
(Coming so quietly that none may know)
Lay your lips so . . .
Kiss and conjure me, thus, . . . till I awake,
And men shall marvel that they called me dead,
Seeing me lean towards you from my bed.
This for my sake!” . . .
Thus spake my love, and kissed me as she spake.

II.

My love spake thus to me in midwinter;
I, chiding her,

Talked of long summer days, blossoms on bough,
Sunlight aglow,
Woods wide awake with echo of sweet song,
And all day long
Very delight at living life so fair;
And, straining her towards me in mine arms,
Strove with light words to silence her alarms,
Smoothed her soft hair,
And blamed her thoughts, seeing so sad they were.

III.

But, well-a-day! the winter overpassed,
Spring came at last,
Flow'rs under foot and birds upon the boughs;—
From out the house
Her women came, with haggard looks, and said,
“Your love is dead!
Strewn round with garden-lilies all as fair,
Come and behold her where she lies asleep.”
Then I, too sick in spirit e'en to weep
For my despair,
Passed up into the house and saw her there.

IV.

Crowned with just such a wreath as one I made
When, 'neath the shade,
We sat in summer-time breast high in fern,
Beside the burn,
With all life seeming moulded to our will—
So cold, so still,

I had not even kissed her out of fear ;
Yet, for acquittal of my promise' sake,
And for her own, that she would straightway wake,
I then and there
Bent down my falt'ring lips to kiss my dear.

V.

"Ah, wake to me!" I cried, "my love, my life !
More than my wife !
Dearer than waking love of living man!"
And I began
(Bearing in memory her fond request)
From her cold breast

To thrust aside white lilies and green yew,
Kissing and calling her—"Awake, awake!
Awake, my darling, for your promise' sake,
Made whilst your lips were warm!" 'Twas then I
knew
Her words untrue:
Kiss howsoe'er I might, she would not wake.
She will not wake—ah me, she will not wake!

A MAY MEETING.

THE same gold gorse, and the same brown heather,
And the same shrill note of the plover's cry,
And the same curl'd cloud, like an angel's feather,
Afloat in the midst of an amber sky ;

And away to the westward, the same sun setting,
Midst the cloudland castles that nobody owns,—
And the same little stream that goes foaming, fretting,
To seaward, over the self-same stones ;

And the same old mansion, its casements burning
Aglow with the sun's last lingering rays,
And over the fir-tree top, at the turning,
The first bright star of those last bright days !



Curly brown locks and golden tresses,
A youth and a maiden fair to see,
With whispering words and stol'n caresses,
And the hope in their hearts of a bliss to be.

* * * *

The nightingale hush'd, May turned to December,
Locks and tresses alike grown gray,—
One to forget and one to remember,
And each to travel a different way.

* * * *

Then, the same gold gorse and the same brown heather,
And the same little streamlet bound for the sea ;
And two that have met and talked together ;
Alas for the changes in you and me !

THE GUEST-CHAMBER.

WITH bated breath, and falt'ring feet, I tread
The threshold of this room,—and ever so
Must enter it! The cheerful fire-light glow
Falls softly on the rosy-curtained bed
Made ready for the guest ;—the table spread
With snowy muslin, and with flow'rs that blow
And, e'en in this chill month, their fragrance shed,—
And all seems bright, to those who do not know!
But I am looking,—with mine inward eyes,—
Upon another sight ;—the self-same room
Shrouded and darkened,—and a form that lies
Straightened upon the bed,—the seal of doom
For ever on her lips ;—I hear low sighs
And smell sweet blossoms destined for a tomb.

THE RETURN OF THE BELOVED.

HE is under this roof to-night,—he is home,—he is safe,
—he is well!

So the eyes that were watching may slumber,—the
listening ears be at rest,
All my soul seems to rise and rejoice to the chime of
a marriage bell,
And the heart that was turned to a stone, is as blithe
as a bird in my breast !

How oft,—when the storm-cloud has darkened,—the
tempest beat loud at the pane,
Have I said to my faltering heart, “ Is it well with my
love on his way? . . .
Is he braving the fury of waves, or the withering suns
of the plain,
Or the treacherous tongues that deceive, or the eyes
that may lead him astray? ”

And so,—as the days dragged along, was I torn and tormented with doubt,—

Whilst a pall lay all over the land, and the sun seemed obscured in the sky,—

Forlorn, and unquiet, and anxious,—by daylight I wandered about,

Forlorn, and unquiet, and anxious,—I watched the long nights go by ;—

Afraid to feel careless of spirit, or fill up my life to the brim

With the laughter that drowns all thought, or the labour that leads to repose,

Lest the moments that lightened my pain might be fraught with misfortune for him,—

“I can bear with the Winter,” (I said,) “if the sun will but shine at its close.”

But now,—he is home, he is here! . . . I thank God he is safe, he is well!

Now the slowest of clocks will seem fast,—now the darkest of days will seem fine,—

My heart blithe as a bird in my breast,—all my soul
like a marriage bell,—

He is under this roof to-night, he is safe,—he is well,
—he is mine !

THE THISTLE-DOWN.

ONCE, so it chanced, a wind-blown thistle-down
That floated,—aimless, over English fields
Of corn and clover,—came to where a train
Was speeding swiftly to a sea-port town,
Whence travellers embark for far-off lands.
The rush of wild commotion in the air
Involved the seedling in its headlong course,
That,—at an open window entering in
Was likewise hurried sea-ward. But before
Its fellow travellers had gained the coast
Within some fold or wrappage of their goods
It found itself entrapped, and so constrained
To put to sea with them against its will
And seek the Far Unknown.

There, on an Isle
Where all was new, and strange, and unforeseen,
Its prison bonds were loosed, and forth it flew
To wander over unfamiliar fields,

Where, finally, self-sown, it grew and bloomed
Amongst an alien race of plants and men
That wist not whether it was weed or flow'r.
Now if, as some will have it, plants can feel,—
Not poignantly,—but in some tempered sense
Absorb emotions kindred to our own,—
Or thrill with memories,—then this lonely thing
May well have felt,—in sad regretful mood,
The faint sweet echoing of village bells
Go tingling to its core.—The lowing kine,
The fox-glove, dock, and burdock,—neighbours
once,—
The purple willow-weed that masked the stream
In cool green meadows by its English home,
Not wholly unremember'd, may have left
Their impress,—vague, yet ineffacable,
Upon its stubborn nature !

Even thus

The Poet,—often vexed and out of tune
With his surroundings,—seems to stand apart
And live an inner life, that thrills and teems
With recollections, echoes, images,
Wafted from some far Past he knew not here,—
A Past he knows not,—wholly,—where he knew,—

At times, his waking dreams take form and voice
And seem realities ;—His spirit glows
As with consuming fires,—his soul laments
Some sweet lost bow'r,—some unaccomplished dream
Of vanish'd love,—unbounded,—infinite
And all-sufficing.

. . . Doth he vex his heart
With self-created woes,—illusions bred
Of an intemperate imagination,
Or, like the thistle-down that cross'd the sea
Is he,—in truth,—some poor transplanted thing,
Set, by mere accident, in foreign soil,
Amongst an alien race? . . .

Wrapped in his dreams
He feeds his fancy, till it spreads and blooms
And runs to seed, whilst but a few of those
Who look and listen, know, or weed from flow'r,
Or flow'r from weed!

FALSE OR TRUE?

THE woman I loved has been gone a year—

(A year from my lips, a year from my breast!)—
I saw her lie cold on her flow'r-strewn bier
Ere they bore her away to her lonely rest.

I had loved her as never man loved before,
Or promised maiden or plighted wife :

I have mourned for her loss upon sea and shore,
And known, without her, a death in life.

I have missed her letters, her pray'rs, her tears,
Her sighs, her laughter, her chiding tone,
Her foolish fancies, her idle fears,
And her love that seemed all my own !

I have sought for her spirit by day and night—
(Oh ! for a look, for a touch, for a breath,
For a whisper'd word from my soul's delight
To bring me life from the realms of Death !)

Thus have I lived for a whole long year,
But my comrades have never known aught of this;
And one has just whispered a word in my ear,
A word to give comfort, nor take amiss;

"You are well, my friend, you are gay," he said;
"I am glad at heart that they told me true;
I had feared you were mourning for one who is dead,
And who should have been nothing to you."

And then he told me of how he knew—
And of how he would prove to me by and by
That the one I had loved so well was untrue,
That her life had been all a lie.

And *I*? I answered him never a word—
I utter'd no cry, nor of rage nor pain,
But stood blankly staring, and meekly heard—
In an hour he will come again.

He will bring me proofs, in black and white,
Written words in a well-feigned hand;
But *I* shall know how to read aright—
I shall profit and understand!

(Cold she lay on her flow'r-strewn bier,
Cold, and quiet, and draped in white,
With her hair combed carefully back from her ear)—
Is he wrong, I wonder, or right?

Here have I sat since he said his say—
(A year? A day? How long ago?)—
So her lips could lie, and her eyes betray? . . .
In an hour I shall read and know!

Yet the lips in this pictured face look true,
And the eyes gaze so tenderly back into mine!
The lips are so red, and the eyes so blue,
But mute, they can give no sign!

Speak, lips that are silent! Speak, questioning eyes!
Come back, light step, to the echoing stair!
I have called to her thus till she seemed to rise
And stand in the doorway, there.

And sometimes she comes as an angel Queen,
Winged with silver and crowned with light,
With calm pure eyes and a serious mien,
In garments of dazzling white.

And sometimes she comes as so oft of yore,
Cloaked, and veiled, and quietly dressed,
And flies to my arms ere I close the door—
It is thus that I love her best!

Will she come to-night in her cloak and veil,
Or with angel-lustre around her brow?
Will she cling to my knees as a penitent pale?
No matter! I know her now!

I know her now, that woman who died,
With her pleading voice and her earnest gaze—
Her false blue eyes, and her lips that lied,
And her treacherous, winning ways! . . .

Yet the lips in her pictured face look true . . .
Sweetest of lips that are sealed and set!
Tenderest eyes, that are closed to view—
Shall my mind mistrust thee, my soul forget?

Cold she lay on her flow'r-strewn bier—
I could not question, nor she reply;
And now, when her heart has been still but a year,
Shall I harden my own for a lie?

Nay, Love of my life! it shall never be said
When our innermost thoughts stand forth reveal'd,
That,—trusting you living,—I doubted you dead
When your lips were silent and seal'd!

If it was as he says, and I never knew,
Will knowing it now bring me better cheer? . . .
One heart,—at least, shall beat loyal and true;—
He may speak, but I will not hear!

IN MEMORIAM.

WE are survivors ; from the echoing street
One more familiar footstep dies away
Into eternal silence. Day by day
Some eye that brightened, some brave heart that beat,
Is closed and stilled. Alas ! those hurrying feet,
Where are they fled, bearing the bright array
Of Wisdom, Beauty, Youth ? And where are they
Whose living love made life and leisure sweet ?
I cannot deem they are departed quite—
Transfigured, changed, and vanished from our eyes—
But living to us still, though lost to sight,
And surely sharing still our smiles and sighs !
A self-made creed, begot of memories ;
Yet, if I err, whose voice shall set me right ?

A HOMELESS LOVE.

Poor Love is driven out,
Even with scourge and knout,—
What evil has he wrought to deserve so rude a
waking? . . .

He is exiled from the bow'rs
Where he pass'd such blissful hours,
And underneath his batter'd wings his little heart is
breaking!

In what cold lonely bed
Is he to rest his head? . . .

What orphanage or almshouse will take him in its
keeping? . . .

Ah, Love has had his day,
So he must go his way;—
He weeps, but none are sorry for his weeping!

Played he not well his part?
Was not his tender heart

Ever faithful and brave, alike in days of joy or sorrow?
In what was he remiss?
Gave he not kiss for kiss?
What fault of his has brought about this miserable
morrow?

So he had bed and board
Nor guerdon nor reward
Claim'd he—as of a right, who was not arrogant or
grasping,
Accounting himself rich
If, in some hidden niche,
His heart might only beat against the treasure he was
clasping.

In such a narrow space
Could he take up his place,—
A spider's fairy web, or else a curl'd up leaf in
summer,—
There would he lodge, and lie
Beneath a cloudless sky,
Unexpectant of rebuff from either comrade or new-
comer.

For, if a step drew near
He would prick his watchful ear,
And then nestle snug and close and give forth no sign
or greeting,
Holding his eager breath
He would feign to lie in death,
Tho' underneath his folded wings his little heart was
beating !

But dismal days have come
And he has now no home,
His very cobweb lodging is or ruin'd or bespoken,
The leaf wherein he curl'd
Is spread open to the world,
And underneath his bleeding wings his little heart is
broken !
In what cold lonely bed
Is he to rest his head ?
What orphanage or almshouse will take him in its
keeping? . . .
Ah, Love has had his day,
So he must go his way,
He weeps, but none are sorry for his weeping !

SIX SONNETS.

I.

CONCENTRATION.

MINE has not been the lot of those who find
By warm fire-sides the light of friendly smile,
Nor can the stolèd priest in fretted aisle
Soothe with his specious salves my stubborn mind;—
I strain not after gold with those who grind
The mill of daily toil, nor care to while
The absent hour with pleasures that beguile
Since home, creed, wealth, and world, in one combined.
See then, my friend, how great has been my gain,—
How kind sweet destiny,—how wise my choice! . . .
How have I cause to triumph and rejoice
Whilst all I treasure my two arms contain!
Tho', should one heart grow cold, and mute one voice
My soul must languish in perpetual pain!

II.

LOVE'S VANITY.

IT is for you, dear love, I dress, and don
Soft raiment, lace, and jewels of red gold
To shine in your eyes only, and to hold
At the sword's point what was so dearly won,—
And so, and not for self's sake,—I put on
These pomps and vanities, which you behold
But scarcely mark! Ah, vain and manifold
Are Love's poor wiles, yet none are new,—not one!
For ladies ev'n as I,—long, long, ago,
In some such eyes as yours to merit grace,
Twined chains of shining gold, and pearls in row,
And decked themselves in jewels and fine lace,
Above whose bones, to-day, rank burdocks grow,
Whilst cold winds sigh around their resting place!

III.

UNCERTAINTY.

DOUBT not the wisdom of the just Decree
Which saith, "Ye shall not know: Ye shall not raise
The veil that shrouds the dawning of new days
And new misfortunes!" . . . Who could live, yet see
The loved one's vacant place? or watch him, free,—
Turning to tread, with cold averted gaze,
The paths that lead from old familiar ways,
And all the cruel changes that may be? . . .
Nothing I know, and nothing understand,—
Nor would I lift the veil, and yet, altho'
Your days may prove the longest in the land,
Still,—since I neither understand nor know,
And cannot read the lines in this dear hand
I hold it fast,—afraid to let it go!

IV.

THE SLAVE TURNED TYRANT.

SHOULD you despise her for that,—born to sway
She serves instead ;—at your belovèd feet
Meek and obedient, that she takes her seat,
And,—as you frown or smile,—is grave or gay :—
A word,—a look,—can darken all her day
Or make night glorious,—but, as thus you mete,
Conscious of might,—alternate bitter and sweet,
Careless of what you do, or what you say,—
Think, Master mine ! not thus, in by-gone days
Dared your hand smite her, or your accents check
The love you craved for ! . . . Hers has been
the fault
Who raised her slave to sit above the salt,
And so, she may not chide, but only prays
For mercy,—with your heel upon her neck.

V.

THE VOW.

You swore, and by my life, that you were true;
And still I let you swear,—nor with a kiss
Hushed those dear accents, lest they might dismiss
My body to its bed beneath the yew!
Green fields are fair, and summer skies are blue,
Yet,—so I find you false,—what profits this?
How sigh in solitude for vanished bliss
Or know another dawn that knows not you?
So, if your words were words, and nothing more,
Spoken in jest, or said to satisfy
The hunger of my heart,—if so you swore,
And so, swore falsely, it were best to die
Could your words kill! Then, say them o'er and o'er
Nor let me live to languish if you lie!

VI.

THE VOW BROKEN.

Ah, wanton words ! Ah, sweetest lips forsworn !
Ah, lightly spoken,—lightly broken, vow,
Whose inspiration was the vehement glow
Of Love's brief summer, when the rose is born !
We are grown wise enough to laugh to scorn
Youth's rash asseverations ;—we, who know
How coldly crawls the stream 'neath frost and snow
That leapt so lightly on an April morn !
See,—still I sojourn midst the haunts of men
Despite your perfidy ! Suns rise and set
To warm a world that seems as fair as when
We gazed on it together,—and yet—and yet,—
I know not, even now, without regret
If I can smile at what I wept for then !

MEMORIES.

WRITTEN ON AN ANNIVERSARY.

WE should remember ;—years roll on apace
 But as the headlong Alpine torrent brings
Down to the hoary mountain's shadowy base
 The drift and wreck of rare and far-off things,—

An eagle's plume,—maybe ;—a crystal gem
 That lurk'd, of old,—beneath eternal snows
On virgin peaks ;—or else some sever'd stem
 Of '*edelweis'* or cluster'd Alpine rose ;—

So, in our altered lives,—constrained to take
 Their tamer course along the level ways,
Some floating memory may serve to wake
 The slumb'ring consciousness of vanish'd days.

To-day, such tribute Life's calmed river brings
From stormier heights;—a crystal bright and rare;—
A feather from an eagle's wide-spread wings,—
A flow'r that blossom'd once in purer air!

A WISH.

I WOULD there were a post-office,
 However far away,—
And whatsoever the postage was
 That I might have to pay
For a letter to reach my dear dead love
 Upon some future day !

I would write it with my own heart's blood
 And sprinkle it with tears,
And tell him what my life had missed
 Thro' all these weary years,
If my mute appeal could penetrate
 The music of the spheres !

I would send him a flow'r, in this letter of mine,
 And tell him where it grew,

And whose were the hands that had planted it there
In the Churchyard,—under the yew;—
And a lock of the hair that he used to praise,
And a kiss, I would send him too!

He would find that the flow'r was faded and dead,
That the bright brown hair was grey;—
But the kiss that was his in the days of yore
Would keep tender and true for aye;—
Ah, me! if an answer could only come back
Whatever there was to pay!

THE IRISH "PATRIOTS."

(To WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.)

THINK you these men seek truly Ireland's ease
From England's yoke ;—her front exalted, free,
Amongst the nations ruled by just decree
Of King or Council? . . . Dare you hope that these,—
The things they crave to-day,—could wholly please
Such fretful spirits ;—that their eyes could see
The calm that would engulf them ; or, maybe,
Two sister-flags,—afloat o'er friendly seas?
Nay! for above the boasted love they bear
Their native Isle ;—ay, over and above
The hate they bear the Saxon,—flowers fair,
In genial soil,—another kind of love,—
The love they bear themselves ; that this may thrive
It is expedient that they strut and strive !

THE BEST AND THE WORST.

THAT is not always best which seems the best ;—
 The hoped-for thing,—the thing expected long ;—
 The rarer song
Of songster bred in the remotest nest ;—
 The fruit that hangs aloft at greatest height ;—
 The pastime planned out for our own delight ;—
 This is not always best.

That is not always worst which seems the worst ;—
 The joy denied ;—the hope condemned to fade ;—
 The blossom laid
Low by the storm which our fond hands have nurst
 And tended lovingly ;—the world foregone
 To solace those who suffer all alone ;—
 This is not always worst.

This is the best,—which may not seem the best
Till Man's true mission shall be understood;—
 To seek the Good
Tho' Evil follow on it;—to be blest
In blessing others;—to esteem as naught
The sacrifice of self in deed and thought:—
 This always is the best.

This is the worst,—which needs must seem the worst;
To doubt God's goodness;—find a friend unjust,
 Or feel our trust
Rest on a broken reed;—to know the first
Of our heart's idols of all honour shorn;—
To see ourself turn'd to a thing we scorn;—
 This surely is the worst!

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LADY CURRIE, formerly Mrs. Singleton,
and known in the world of letters as "Violet
Fane," whose death is recorded, is shown
by her 'Denzil Place' to have had a greater
power of telling a tale in verse than has
been generally admitted by critics.

Oct
1905

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